

all Federal student loans, and that would cost \$1.6 trillion. Forgive them all. Just forgive all of the loans. It doesn't matter. Rich or poor, forgive all of the loans. Well, that would drive up the price of tuition even higher. If it allows colleges to get the money directly from the Federal Government without having to go through the students, the costs will escalate dramatically.

Let me remind my Democratic colleagues that most Americans don't have college degrees. Yet, under the Democratic plan, all taxpayers—all taxpayers—would have to pay for the college tuitions for all of the students, including those who have families who can clearly afford to pay the tuitions to the colleges which they attend. It doesn't matter. If you go to the most exclusive college or if you go to your State college, if you have a debt, we are going to get rid of it, says the Democratic proposal, and the hard-working taxpayers of America are going to be stuck with the bill. Count me out on that one.

The Democrats want to take tax dollars from people who don't have college degrees or who never went to college and give it to the leftwing professors at so many universities, and this is wrong.

President Biden also wants to double down on ObamaCare. He thinks ObamaCare didn't go far enough. According to one estimate, President Biden's healthcare plan would cost about an additional \$2.25 trillion. These are astronomically large figures. His housing plan would cost \$640 billion. The Democrats have proposed another \$2 trillion in infrastructure spending. One Democratic Senator even called for doubling that amount—\$4 trillion in new infrastructure spending.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. I could go on and on. If you add up all of the new spending proposals by the Democrats and the White House and the Senate, it could cost nearly \$12 trillion. By the end of this year, the national debt is going to be bigger than our economy, and we have the biggest economy in the world. Even before the Democrats passed their wish list, we were on track this year to have the second biggest deficit since World War II.

When the Democrats increase spending, we know what is next—massive tax increases on the American public. We heard it yesterday in the news. It was in the headlines. That is President Biden's plan—the first major tax increase in 28 years. He is proposing the biggest tax increase since 1993. He wants to raise taxes on businesses and on families, and he even wants to resurrect the death tax. Let me remind President Biden what happened after 1993. A year later, the Republicans took back the House and took back the Senate.

The 2020 elections were close. The American people didn't vote for this radical agenda, and it is a radical agen-

da. They didn't vote for \$12 trillion in new spending and new taxes with increased tax rates and increased taxes on long-term investments like your home and increased taxes like the death tax—oh—and more money for the IRS so it can send agents to investigate the American public even further.

I would urge the Biden administration and my Democratic colleagues to listen to the people and to the people from whom I hear every weekend in Wyoming. It is time to put down the credit card. It is time to stop the spending spree. It is time to move to the middle to solve problems—that would be best for our Nation if we would address them—for the people of this great Nation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we welcome about a million immigrants every year. We welcome them because they come here, abiding by our laws, and we need immigrants. We have been a welcoming country for a long time, but I come to the floor to speak about the ongoing crisis at our southern border—a crisis that, I think, this administration doesn't want to admit is a crisis. Because of some changes in policy, we have that crisis, and that crisis is people entering our country in violation of our laws.

Since taking office, this administration has advanced policies that have undermined immigration enforcement. These policies undermine efforts to secure our southern border, and they encourage illegal immigration into our country. President Biden has signaled that, when it comes to immigration that violates our laws, the United States is open for business. Speaker PELOSI and House Democrats are doubling down on that position this very week. They are working to pass several mass amnesty bills that contain no provisions related to securing the border.

It turns out that people are finally paying attention. U.S. Customs and Border Protection recently confirmed that it had encountered over 100,000 migrants attempting to cross the southern border in February—the first full month of this new administration. That is the highest total for the month of February since 2006. News reports are that Democrats are blaming Trump's policies for this situation that we are in. Yet the number of single adults encountered at the southern border was up 175 percent compared to last February. The number of family units was up 170 percent, and the num-

ber of unaccompanied alien children was up 171 percent.

The Department of Health and Human Services, which is responsible for the care of the unaccompanied children after they arrive in the United States, had 7,300 unaccompanied children referrals in February. That is the highest number of February referrals in the history of the program.

As of late last week, Health and Human Services had over 8,500 unaccompanied children in its facilities.

As of this past weekend, more than 4,200 were being held by the Customs and Border Patrol holding facilities, with nearly 3,000 being held past the legal limit of 72 hours.

These are the “kids in cages,” whom many of our Democratic colleagues were so outraged about a few years ago, blaming Trump, even though the so-called cages were created in the Obama administration, just being reused again.

Curiously, we are not seeing nearly as much outrage now as we saw during the Trump episode. Where is our fair and balanced press today?

Reports emerged late last week that one Border Patrol facility in Texas was operating at 729 percent of pandemic capacity. Many minors who had been in custody for over 5 days were reportedly able to shower only once.

If this were happening during the Trump administration, our Democratic colleagues would be expressing their anger and their outrage on any media outlet that they could find. But because this crisis is happening as a result of President Biden's policies, we have mostly silence.

President Biden's border crisis reaches beyond just these staggering numbers that I have given you. First, it is a humanitarian tragedy—a crisis. The Biden administration's policies have incentivized unaccompanied children and family units to make an incredibly dangerous trip to our southern borders.

On March 10, Reuters reported that the Mexican Government is worried that the Biden administration's asylum policies “are stoking illegal immigration and creating business for organized crime”—from the Mexican Government, reported by Reuters.

There is no doubt that cartels are profiting greatly from this trafficking. One Mexican official was quoted as saying: “Migrants have become a commodity.”

The article went on to discuss how gangs are “diversifying methods of smuggling” and how smugglers are advising migrants on how to more easily apply for asylum in the United States, including by bringing children.

It also described how higher concentrations of migrants in areas near the U.S.-Mexican border have encouraged gangs to recruit some migrants as drug mules and to kidnap other migrants. For what? For money. This is a tragedy, and it is a tragedy created in just recent weeks by changes of policies at the border by this new administration.

Second, President Biden's border crisis presents a public health threat in the middle of a pandemic.

Recent reports have indicated that the administration plans to turn two Texas facilities, where migrant family units are being held, into rapid processing centers. The plan is to hold the family units for 3 days or less.

It is unclear if all of these migrants are being tested for COVID-19, when they are being tested, how they are being tested, and how they are being handled if they test positively.

Recent media reports also indicate that 100 undocumented immigrants who were released by the Department of Homeland Security into the United States later tested positive for the virus. In these times, as we are all concerned about the pandemic, it can't be acceptable.

Finally, President Biden's border crisis has created a situation that is overwhelming the men and women who work to protect our borders. It is straining the resources of agencies that must cope with the results of this administration's misguided immigration policies.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Federal Government and any Presidential administration, Republican or Democrat, is to enforce our immigration laws in ways that ensure the sovereignty of our borders, protects the American people, and, lastly, discourages illegal immigration. It is clear that this administration has failed to live up to this responsibility.

I hope that President Biden changes course and begins to work with Congress in a bipartisan way to secure our borders and, at the same time, reform our laws in ways that discourage this violation of our immigration laws by people just willy-nilly crossing the border, even being invited here. If they instead continue on their present course, this will be just the first of many border surges to come over the next 4 years.

What we need is to keep our doors open, as we have done for decades with legal immigrants, and do everything we can to discourage people from coming here in violation of our laws.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio.

JOBS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to talk about workforce training, a critical issue always but particularly now as we get to the point where we are coming out of the COVID-19 crisis, the economy is picking up, and we need more workers in this country.

It is a significant issue to be able to help individuals to be able to achieve their God-given potential in life, but also it is really important to our economy because workforce is one of the big challenges we have. So to be able to get good-paying benefits for those workers, it is important but also to help our economy fully recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has been over a year now since the pandemic changed all of our lives. In the early weeks and months of that crisis, it looked like things were going to continue to be really tough. I stayed in touch with business owners and workers across my home State of Ohio to hear how they were handling the closures, the layoffs, the other painful side effects of the crisis in those early months. Finally, things are getting better, and we are beginning to see more reopenings.

In Ohio, we just learned that people are going to be able to get vaccinations if they are 40 years old or older versus 60 years old and older as of the end of the week. And within another 10 days, everybody 16 years and up will be able to get a vaccine. And we have opened up some wonderful mass vaccination centers. I volunteered at one on Saturday. I spent 5 hours directing people and heard a lot of emotional stories about people really excited about getting back to their families—grandparents being able to see their grandkids for the first time in a year and the opposite, children being able to visit their parents or grandparents for the first time since the COVID-19 crisis hit, and people excited about getting back to work and back to school. So we are going to be able to see this because of Operation Warp Speed and the heroic efforts of our medical researchers and begin to help move our economy forward.

In fact, we just found out that the economy added a healthy 379,000 jobs in February. That was encouraging. And more and more businesses, again, are reopening and replacing the signs that said "Closed Because of COVID" with signs that now say "Help Wanted."

I was at a hearing today, and the representative from the National Association of Manufacturers told us that there are over 500,000 manufacturing jobs that are being offered right now. In other words, there is a shortage of manufacturing skills right now. So that is a good thing in the sense that that means there will be opportunity, but we have to have the skills to be able to fill those jobs.

Perhaps most promising, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, called CBO—it is a group around here that gives us advice on the economy—said that even without the most recent spending package, the \$1.9 trillion package, that the economy is going to recover to where it was pre-pandemic by midyear. So by June 30, they think the economy will be back to where it was pre-pandemic. And we had a good economy then. In February, a year ago, we

had the 19th straight month of wage growth of 3 percent or more. We had 3.5 percent unemployment, a 50-year low. We had historically low unemployment for Blacks, Hispanics. We had the lowest poverty rate we had in 60 years. Things are going well, not just for the economy but bringing people out of the sidelines and in to work. But, obviously, the pandemic hit hard. And, now, as the economy begins to recover again, we have to be sure that people have the skills they need to take advantage of a growing economy.

The pro-growth policies that we have had along the way, including the tax cuts, tax reform, regulatory relief, had helped to make sure that economy was not just strong but also inclusive. So we have to keep that up as well.

But just as the biggest challenge pre-COVID, when we had a strong economy, was finding workers with needed skills, we are back there again. So if we want to get back to the kind of economy we all want, the workforce challenge has to be addressed.

In fact, again, I think it will be an even bigger challenge now because during COVID-19, there has been a dislocation in the economy. Some jobs have been lost, and people have to find new jobs and develop skills. Some are going to have to leave the hospitality industry, for instance, and they might want to go into the tech sector or go into the manufacturing sector or the healthcare sector. So that ability to shift jobs and develop skills is more important than ever.

I am hearing it from employers all over Ohio; that as unemployment continues to fall, there are thousands of job openings for positions like welders and machinists in our manufacturing plants. I mentioned the national figure of 500,000 jobs are available right now, so we are certainly seeing that in Ohio in our factories, medical technicians in hospitals, a lot of interest in techs and in people who are willing to work in healthcare to help others, computer programmers, coders. Almost every sector of the economy is looking for people who have coding skills. So these are the kinds of jobs that economists call the midlevel skills; you know, they need more than a high school degree, for sure, but don't need a college degree. And they actually are jobs that pay quite well with good benefits. So these are the kinds of jobs that we need to be sure that we are providing out there.

The supply of skilled workers in that category, students pursuing post-high school certificates in one of these skilled areas, falls way short. They call it the skills gap. And it is holding back our economy from reaching its potential, just as it is holding back individuals from achieving their potential.

There was one study from 2019 that found that the skills gap could cause us to miss out on nearly \$1.2 trillion of economic output over the next, at that point, 10 years. So, unfortunately, that skills gap hasn't been closed. In fact,